

barely
there

DAKOTA TRACE

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Barely There

By Dakota Trace

Once upon a time...there was an owner of a plus size women's clothing store who was approached by the creator of a new style of clothing that was sure to be the rage. Empress Chikowski was the owner of this store and due to her statuesque physique she had always searched for stylish clothes for her plus size figure. Then one day, Nicolai Rambaudi, the creator of a new style of clothing that was scandalous as it was beautiful. He set about convincing Empress that they would look smashing even on her generous figure...

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Empress Chikowski stormed into her back office. As usual her appearance had started out immaculate and professional but she ended up the same as she did every day. She slipped into the washroom and winced at her reflection. Her once tidy French braid was now loose and several strands of hair had slipped free of their moorings, not to mention the frizzy halo that all people with natural curls seem to possess. The light weight linen suit that looked so smart this morning was now wrinkled and even stained with a spot of antipasto sauce that she had somehow managed to spill on herself at lunch. One wouldn't think that a woman her age wouldn't need a bib to eat lunch. But at times she wondered.

"Em, there is a man out here who says he has an appointment to show you his new line?"

Empress looked up in the mirror to see Heidi, her head clerk and assistant in the doorway.

"Yeah, I know. Give me ten minutes and then I will see him," she replied.

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Nicolai stood in the midst of the women's clothing store. His brother had first suggested the "Barely There" clothes idea. And, as an active nudist, he had to admit the concept of clothing that mimicked a woman's natural skin tone and hinted at her beautiful curves was very appealing; but standing inside of this store he wasn't sure that the plus size woman would appreciate such clothing - that it might be a bit too much to ask that a large woman wear his designs. He was just thinking of leaving when the clerk returned from the back.

"She'll be ready in a few minutes," the tall willowy woman said with a genuine smile. He stuffed his hands in his pockets and stared around the store again. It wasn't completely deserted but obviously his presence had hushed the warm atmosphere. The clerk joined one of the few customers and led her to what he assumed was a fitting room. He felt like a piece of meat in a room full of vegetarians. The many racks of elegant clothing were rainbows of many hues. He took a silk dress off the nearest rack and was genuinely surprised to see the expert cut and design of the piece. Maybe this wasn't such a bad idea, he thought.

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Empress watched the man on the security monitor as he examined the dress he held. She licked her lips as she studied him. He was taller than average, that much was for certain. He was a good six to eight inches taller than the almost six foot tall rack beside him. She swallowed roughly. At six feet and one inch, she was almost always looked her dates in the eye, if she didn't tower over them. Her heart beat faster as she noticed the way that he handled the delicate silk. In her experience most men were rough on the delicate fabrics but it was obvious that he was savoring the soft feel

against his skin. It made her wonder if he would do the same with a woman's delicate flesh. Her thighs quivered as she continued to watch him examine every inch of the dress in his hands.

"Isn't he just dreamy?" Heidi asked as she came to stand next to Em.

"Yes," Em admitted, turning away from the monitor. "You can send him in, Heidi. And be a dear, clear my schedule for the rest of the day."

"Damn girl, I know that's he yummy but you don't have to jump his bones on the first date," Heidi joked, knowing full well her boss's view on casual relationships. One night over a pitcher full of margaritas, Em had confided that she didn't get what the 'big deal' was concerning sex. But one look at the way her boss was reacting to the man on the sales floor — she was going to soon figure out exactly what the big deal was.

"Just show him in, Heidi," Em repeated as she walked over and sat down behind her desk. It seemed that her desk mimicked her, it started out neat and orderly but by the end of the day it was just as messy - and cluttered as she was.

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Nicolai sauntered into the office carrying his briefcase. He took a quick glance around the small room, taking in the various details. It was cozy, more fitting for afternoon tea than a working office. Behind a hardwood desk sat the woman he was there to see. He thought he would be greeted by a woman that reminded him of his sainted grandmother...a round and pleasantly plump, older woman. Instead the dark-haired temptress that greeted him was not at all what he had expected.

"Hello, my name is Nicolai Rambaudi. I have a meeting set up with Ms. Chikowski."

"Of course. I am Empress Chikowski. Have a seat Mr. Rambaudi," she said, her softly accented voice sending chills of awareness up his spine,

"Empress?" he asked as he took the seat in front of her desk.

"Yes, and please no wise cracks about it. If Empress is too much of a mouth full, please call me Em. Most everyone does. Now what can I do for you, Mr. Rambaudi?"

"Nicolai, please. I have a new design line of clothing I would like to show you." He opened his briefcase and pulled out a sheaf of papers. He handed them across the desk to her. She gazed at the first sketch, quickly masking shock. Nicolai watched as she slowly turned the pages. Although the shock at the first page was now gone, he could see her eyes flare with interest as she viewed the following pages.

He could see her face was flushed as she looked back up at him.

"These are not exactly what I was expecting. I am not sure that they are what I would sell in my shop, Nicolai. They might be better suited for the shop down the street. It specializes in sexy lingerie and clothing. Most of the women that frequent my shop are up and coming business women that need suitable but attractive clothes for work." Em smiled gently, hoping to soften the rejection.

"I did notice that you carry quite a line of business clothes, but I also noticed that you had a whole section devoted to evening wear. This clothing line is not meant for the office any more than the evening dresses that you have displayed," Nicolai pointed out as he leaned forward in the chair.

"I am well aware of the clothing lines that I offer, Mr. Rambaudi. I just can't see this line working well with the rest of the clothing that I offer," she said passing the drawings back across the desk.

"Let me ask you something Empress, what is it about my clothing design that bothers you?" he asked as he pushed the papers back into her and stared directly into her eyes.

Em stiffened. She looked back at the drawings in her hands.

"Frankly, Nicolai, these clothes are better suited on a nudist beach than actual wear. I can't see any woman of my stature wearing them comfortably. Even the evening clothes that I choose to carry are picked with the larger woman's body in mind."

"I see, and you think that a 'larger woman' would not be comfortable in this design? Or is it you, Em, that wouldn't be comfortable wearing it?" he asked his voice going husky.

"Whether or not I choose to wear a particular design of clothing has nothing to do with whether or not I would purchase it for my shop." She fought the image of modeling his design for him. She felt her womb clench in excitement.

"I can totally understand that. No smart business woman would ever base her final decisions on her personal feelings alone. That is why I think you should let me have some 'large women' as you call them, try on my clothing and have a 'feedback' session."

"A feedback session?" She arched one dark eyebrow at him, imagining the feedback that she would love to give him. This was so unlike her. She never had a problem concentrating on business.

"Yes, an honest rant and rave about my designs and how each woman feels - and how their significant other would like or dislike my designs."

"And what would be the catch?" She tried to focus but she couldn't help but stare at his firm lips.

"What makes you think that there's a catch?" he asked.

"There's always a catch, Mr. Rambaudi. So what is it?"

"The only thing I want is for you to personally try my designs. I want you to feel the difference between being a beautiful woman and feeling like one," he said, standing and walking toward the desk. Em drew a deep but quick breath before surging out of her chair. She couldn't help but notice how gorgeous he was up close. She needed to get him out of her office before she threw him to the floor and raped him.

"Whether or not I feel beautiful is none of your business," Em muttered as she picked up and handed him the sheaf of papers.

"My, my, I do believe you have a bit of temper there, Empress. But who are you lying to? I saw the flash of desire and intrigue in your eyes. You hid it quickly but for a brief moment it was there. I can tell my ideas have stirred your senses. Why not try my designs?"

"As if I would subject myself to the indignity of wearing something that is better suited to a sex shop," Em said as she fought to control her trembling. She walked toward the open door of her office. "Thank you for showing me your designs but I am sorry but I will have to pass."

"I think you are being a bit closed minded, Em. Why not let me arrange the showing? You can even decide on the women to try them. Perhaps some of your most loyal customers would be interested. Even if it is just to put me in my place. If they completely hate my designs, I'll take my line elsewhere," Nicolai said as he stopped just

inches from her. Em swallowed as she had to lift her eyes to look up at him. It was a new experience for her. She hoped that he didn't notice how distracted she was. She was supposed to be thinking about business!

She caught her breath as he tipped his head down toward her.

"And if they like it?" she asked softly — breathlessly.

"If they love it, then you buy my designs AND I get to see you in one of them," he breathed across her soft parted lips.

"Nicolai..." she moaned as his breath teased her parted lips. All thoughts of business had been buried under the need to feel his supple lips against hers.

"So do we have a deal, Em? Will you give me what I want?" he asked, his voice gravelly with desire.

"I...I..." she mumbled as she lifted her head to bring their lips closer together.

"Yes, *mi bella*, " he prompted, his Italian accent deeper than it had been earlier.

"Okay," she sighed as she waited for him to bring his mouth against hers.

"Here's my card," He reached into the inner pocket of his coat and pulled out his business card. He slipped it down the open V of her blouse. She inhaled sharply as the blunt edges of the card teased her swollen breasts. A small growl filled the room as he gazed down at her heaving cleavage.

"Call me when you know what sizes you need, Em. I'll have them made up and bring them over," he said as he stepped back — away from her...away from temptation.

"What?" she asked her voice weak with desire.

"Call me when you're ready," he said as he turned and walked back to her desk to retrieve his briefcase. He tossed his design sketches onto the desk top before turning back to Em.

"I can't believe you did that!" Em's eyes narrowed as he came back within kissing distance.

"What? Slip my card down your blouse, mi bella? Or not giving you the kiss that you wanted?" he asked coolly pausing in front of her.

"Used your sex appeal to make me change my mind about your designs! Do you have no shame?" she hissed before jerking the card out of her blouse.

"Once you get to know me, Empress, you will realize that there is little that embarrasses me, let alone causes me shame," he said with a wink as he walked by her.

"Fuck!" she muttered

Nicolai paused before swinging back around. His briefcase dropped to the floor.

"Don't I wish?" he said, jerking her flush against his hard body. This time there was no build up or teasing - he tipped his head and covered her surprised lips with his. A mutual moan escaped them as he thrust his tongue between her parted lips. Within mere moments Em forgot why she was angry with him. Without thought or intent, she wrapped her arms around his neck as he continued to kiss the breath out of her, backing her up against the closed office door.

She whimpered when his mouth left hers. A soft gasp escaped her when his mouth slid through her hair to land against the shell of her ear. She moaned as his tongue traced around the whorls of her ear before dipping inside. She shivered

helplessly in his arms as sensations raced down her neck to settle in both her nipples and her womb.

He cursed raggedly before pulling away from her. She slumped against the closed door and watched as he pulled his handkerchief out of his pocket. Pressing it against his lips, he removed all traces of her lipstick from his rugged mouth.

"Damn, *mi bella*, you are more potent than 100-proof whiskey," he said.

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Em sighed as she sank into the tub of bubbles. Every part of her body still tingled from her earlier encounter with Nicolai. She couldn't believe that she allowed him to grope her less than ten minutes after meeting him. He was very tempting but she had a firm rule about men. She never dated anyone that she did business with. Jilted lovers had a tendency to smear one's name and make the person look like a fool... and she was no body's fool.

"Damn it!" she groaned as she sank under the water. Her traitorous body wanted him. She had a feeling that he would be the one that made her climax for the very first time. It frustrated her that the only way that she was able to ever come was by herself, alone. In the presence of another she could not bring herself to climax. After the third man that had failed to bring her to orgasm, she had given up on ever finding a man that would be able to push her past the point of no return. But Nicolai Rambaudi might be the one to give her first orgasm with a man.

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Nicolai stared at the opaque fabric in front of him. He was trying to work on his design but the sexy Em kept pushing to the forefront of his mind. It was unusual to find

a woman that he didn't have to break his back to kiss. At six foot seven, he towered over most women. The novelty of being almost eye to eye with a woman was refreshing, not to mention that every inch of Empress Chikowski had felt wonderful against him. The memory of her luscious body pressed against him sent a surge of desire through him. The memory of their kiss caused his cock to stir. He shifted in his seat trying to push the heated memories to the back of his mind.

His brother walking in helped with that, a little.

"Hey, little brother, how did the meeting with the owner of Empress's go?" Sergio asked.

"You set me up!" Nicolai said, continuing to pin the pattern on the material in front of him.

"What! Moi? I would never do that!" Sergio protested

"Don't give me that, Sergio. Ever since you married Rachel you have been trying to get me to settle down. When did you meet her?" Nicolai asked as he made the first cut. The sharp rasp echoed through the room.

"Who?"

"Empress. When did you meet her?" Nicolai looked up and met his brother's sheepish grin head on.

"She's a friend of Rachel's. She met her when Amy needed a bridesmaid dress. They went to Empress's to find the perfect dress."

"And you thought that she would be perfect for me?" he asked as he turned the material and made another cut.

"Well, you have to admit that she is definitely your type," Sergio said defensively.

"I don't have a type, Sergio."

"Admit it. You find her attractive."

"Whether I find her attractive or not, nothing is going to happen."

"And why is that?" his brother asked.

"I don't mix business and pleasure."

"And once the business is done?"

Nicolai looked up at his brother with a huge grin.

"All bets are off."

* * * *

Em had just finished her first cup of coffee when Heidi knocked on her office door. She motioned for Heidi to join her. In front of her she once again had Nicolai's designs spread across her desk.

"Dressing casual today, Boss?" Heidi asked as she propped her hip on the edge of the desk.

"I didn't feel like dressing up. I plan on staying in the office. I have to set up a test group for this design," Em replied as she stood and stretched. She walked over to the coffee pot and poured herself another cup.

"Wow! These are quite risque!" Heidi said from behind her.

"I know. Mr. Rambaudi seems to think that our customers might actually go for it. I still think that they are better suited to the sex shop down the street but I agreed to this

test group. It will be worth it to put him in his place," Em said as she brought the cup to her mouth.

"Do I sense some friction between you and the sexy Mr. Rambaudi?"

Em paused. She turned around to look at Heidi. Then a smile lit up her face.

"I plan on driving him crazy."

"What! What did you do with my boss?" Heidi asked — shock evident in her voice.

Em just smiled mischievously before turning back to her coffee. She had come to the realization that what was good for the goose was good for the gander. If Nicolai thought he could use his sex appeal to sway her into buying his design then she wasn't above using what little sex appeal she had to distract him from his goal.

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Em sighed with satisfaction as she hung the phone. She had managed to fulfill the slots for her test group. She picked up the business card that Nicolai had given her. She really needed to call and give him the correct sizes for each woman. She tapped the end of the card to her lips. She wasn't sure if she could handle talking to him just yet. After the long night that she had spent dreaming about him, she didn't know if her willpower was up to even do something as simple as talking to him on the phone.

She was startled when the phone rang. She waited for Heidi to answer it up front, but after it had rung for the fourth time and the answering machine picked up, she realized that Heidi must have been busy with a customer.

She nearly whimpered when Nicolai's masculine voice filled the office. And unlike most people he had no problem talking to the machine.

" *Ciao, mi bella*, I was wondering if you were being a *brav'ragazza* and have the list of sizes for me. You know the sooner you get them for me - the sooner I can see you in my design. And *mi bella*, I have been imagining you in it all day. So give me a call, so we can make my fantasy come true."

Em moaned as her head dropped onto the desk. The sneaky bastard! She lifted her head and stared at the machine as if it were the most vile of things. She would show him his fantasy, she thought. She would give him a peak and then jerk it away. She was going to show Mr. Rambaudi who would come out on top, she vowed. She grabbed the paper with the appropriate sizes on it and stood up. Grabbing her car keys and her wallet along with his card, she headed out the door. She would show him a thing or two.

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Nicolai smiled as he hung the phone. He wondered how Em was going to react to his message. She was such an uptight little...well okay she wasn't little but she was definitely full of inhibitions. He would love to get her to come to his private beach and strip away all her inhibitions, along with those stuffy clothes that she wore.

"I can't believe you just did that!" Sergio said with a laugh.

"What?" he asked arching his eyebrow at his brother.

"I thought you said that you don't mix business with pleasure!"

"Aw, but I don't. The call is just carefully placed bait. If I don't challenge her, she will stall as long as possible before giving me the information. And the sooner I get the information..."

"The sooner you finish the deal and get the girl?" Sergio finished for him.

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Em stood in front of her open closet, staring at its meager offerings. Sure, she had business suits galore and a few nice dresses, but not a lot in the way of what her mother called hooker clothes. And that was exactly what she wanted to wear for her meeting with Nicolai. She wanted to drive him absolutely crazy. She wanted to give him a peek at what she had but still hold it out of his reach. Her eyes lit on a tan leather skirt and top that Heidi had given her last Halloween - along with a joke about her being Zena, the warrior princess. She had worn it once at the Halloween party she had thrown at her shop. If the reactions of the men were any indication, then the two-piece outfit was sure to be right up Nicolai's alley. Pulling it from her closet, she fingered the soft supple leather. Why not? You only live once.

* * * *

Sergio stuck his head into Nicolai's design shop interrupting once again what little progress Nicolai had made.

"Is there something you need, Brother?" Nicolai asked irritated at another interruption.

"There is someone here to see you, little brother," he said as he stepped further into the room.

"I'm busy!" Nicolai said coolly as he attempted to return to his work.

"Do you really want me to tell Empress Chikowski that you don't have time for her, Nicolai?" Sergio asked softly.

Nicolai's head flew up and surprise - then pleasure filled his handsome face.

"Hell no. Of course I have time for her," He laid his shears back down and took off the elegant eyeglass frames that he wore when working with delicate fabric.

"I figured as much. Just don't swallow your tongue when you see her," Sergio warned before shutting the door behind him. Nicolai frowned at his brother's choice of words. Why would he swallow his tongue? He had plenty of ideas for his tongue and Empress and none of them had anything to do with swallowing. Well maybe...he mused as there was a soft knock on his door.

"Come in," he called, still thinking about the way he could use his tongue on her.

"Good afternoon, Nicolai. I got your message and I had some errands on this end of town so I decided to drop the list of sizes off instead of calling," Em said as she neared the work table.

"Holy shit!" Nicolai growled as he got his first look at her. His cock hardened in a rush. No wonder his brother had told him not to swallow his tongue. Empress looked like every man's fantasy in soft leather. He had expected her to have a wonderful figure after he had held her against him earlier but he had never expected her to be a total bombshell in disguise.

"Pardon?" Em asked softly, arching a dark eyebrow at him. If she was pleased by his lapse of manners, she didn't show it.

"Damn, I am sorry, *mi bella*. I wasn't expecting to see you today and you look wonderful. It must have been quite the errand for you to dress up in such an...attractive outfit," he said as he slowly stood keeping the work table between them. Due to its high surface, he was able to hide his arousal.. He was never more grateful that he had 'special ordered' the cutting table with his height in mind.

"I'm sorry to interrupt your work but it sounded like you were anxious to get started. In fact when you called I was in the process of the setting up your focus group," She walked closer to his work table, curious about what he was working on.

"It's no problem. In fact I'm working on the design right now. Would you like to take a look at it?"

"Could I?" she asked a bit distractedly as she drew in a deep breath filled with the spicy aftershave that he was wearing. If she had thought he looked yummy in the designer suit that he had been wearing the day before, he was mouth-watering in the faded jeans and soft cotton shirt. When he moved around the desk, she immediately noticed that he was wearing slippers. It was obvious that he was comfortable in this room.

"Of course," He took her hand and guided her to the other side of the room where a silk screen was set up. He moved the screen to one side so she could see the mannequin that it hid. She gazed at the beautiful dress it wore. It seemed to hug and flow with the mannequin's curves.

"Wow. It's beautiful. It gives the illusion that there is nothing there but still doesn't reveal anything that would get you arrested. Whatever made you think of such an idea?" She extended her hand, wanting to feel the fabric. She forced her hand to drop before she actually made contact. What the hell was she doing?

"Go ahead, Em. Touch it," he said huskily beside her.

Slowly she reached forward and caressed soft buttery fabric with her fingertips. A soft gasp managed to escape her. Beside her she heard a growl. Startled, she looked over at him. She nearly whimpered when she saw the desire in his eloquent dark eyes.

"It's a very sensuous fabric," she finally managed to say as she jerked her gaze back to the dress.

"Yes, it is," he said as he quickly moved away from her side and back to his work table. "You said you had the sizes for me?" he said briskly, his tone at odds with the huskiness of his voice.

"Ah, yes," Em said as she reached into her hand bag and pulled out a folded piece of stationery. She walked over and handed it to him. She was taken when he picked up a pair of glasses and placed them on his elegant nose, but smiled at his gesture.

"I need them for the small work," he explained with a laugh. "I'm just a bit far-sighted."

She watched as he scanned the list.

"I hope I got all the measurements that you needed," she said nervously.

"There's only one thing that's missing," he said ,grabbing the soft measuring tape. She squeaked as he approached.

"What did I miss?" she asked, backing up.

"Going somewhere?" he taunted.

"Yes. I have an errand..." she trailed off.

"Hmm, I thought you ran your errand already but none the less, I'll make this quick."

"What?" she said breathlessly as he slid the measuring tape behind her.

"You forgot your measurements," his mouth was millimeters from hers. She could feel his breath against her parted lips.

"My measurements?"

"Yes. I need them for your dress. Relax," he said as she jumped in response. She gasped as she felt the tape wrap around her waist and cringed as he pulled it flat against her gently rounded stomach.

"Thirty-one and half," he murmured before sliding the tape down her stomach to her hips. She cringed again as it settled around them. He crouched and tightened the tape. She looked down as he soothed the tape into place and glanced up at her with a half smile.

"Forty-three even," he said softly before rising up once more. She drew a deep breath as the tape slid back up caressing her sensitive body before it settled on her back.

"Relax, *mi bella*," he whispered. She nearly moaned as he pulled the tape around her and it caressed her nipples. He looked down and whistled softly "Forty-five and three eighths. Impressive, *mi bella*. And very tempting," he added before slowly releasing the tape. She drew a jagged breath as the tape fell away and dragged across her hardened nipples.

* * * *

Nicolai stood at the window of his work room and watched as Em escaped in the yellow cab. He rubbed the back of his neck and nearly growled in frustration at her hasty retreat. He couldn't finish this soon enough! It had taken all of his willpower not to throw her across his work desk and have his way with her. And if her reaction was any thing to go on, she had been affected just as much as he had been.

He stifled a groan when he heard the quick tap of two knocks, a pause and then three more. Only one person knocked like that. He turned and watched as his brother's wife walked in.

"Hey Rachel," he said as he walked back over to his work table.

"How's my favorite brother-in-law this afternoon?" she asked as she walked over and hopped up on his table.

"Good. You know one of these days, Rach, you are going to end up with a pin stuck in your ass," he commented as he soothed the pattern back out and reached for his pins.

"So how did it go?" she asked him innocently.

"How did what go?" he asked as he deftly pinned the pattern onto the fabric.

"Empress's visit. I know she was here. I saw her get into the elevator," Rachel said as she watched him cut the soft luscious fabric.

"And what makes you think she was here to see me?" he asked casually as he turned the fabric and continued to cut with great precision.

"Look at me, Nicki," she scolded.

Nicolai's head shot up.

"How many times do I have to ask you not to call me that?" he grumbled.

"About as many as I've asked you not to call me Rach?" she said dryly. "Now quit avoiding my question. How did it go?"

"Fine, Rach. She stopped by to give me the measurements for the focus group. I will be happy when we get through this. I think she would look stunning in this design," he admitted with a smile.

"So YOU do find her attractive. I told Sergio that you wouldn't be able to resist her!" she exclaimed.

"And you couldn't resist trying to play matchmaker?" he asked as he leaned back and folded his arms across his broad chest.

"No. You haven't had a steady girl-friend in years, Nicolai. And that's a shame. Em is a wonderful lady. I know she's not the type that you would normally date - but she has a heart of gold."

"How many times do I have to tell you and Sergio that I don't have a type!"

"Really? Since I've known you, I've only seen you date petite blondes,"

"Come on, Rach! We live in California. I've dated brunettes and redheads too."

"And the fact that none of them have even come up to your shoulder?"

"I'm a freak of nature! Hardly anyone comes up to my shoulder, shrimp," he said as he surged to his feet, lifted her off the table and carried her squirming body to the door. It wasn't much of a challenge. Rachel was five nothing and weighed about a hundred pounds soaking wet with rocks in her pockets. He lifted bolts of cloth that were heavier than Rachel. He stuck his head out the door and yelled for his brother.

Sergio's head appeared out of the office two doors down the hall.

"Come get this woman of yours, Sergio!"

"Well just throw her!" Sergio called back. It was a running joke between the two brothers. If Nicolai was a freak at six seven, Sergio wasn't far behind at six five. They had been teasing Rachel about it for months.

"Okay," he said good-naturedly as he prepared to toss Rachel.

"Don't you dare!" she squealed, smacking him. He smiled devilishly.

"Are you going to let my love life or my 'lack of it' alone?" he asked.

"But..."

"Okay that's it!" He launched his petite sister-in-law in an arch down the hall at his brother. Sergio rushed forward and caught his wife. Nicolai turned back to his workroom, and smiled as he heard the office door slam. Sergio would keep the little matchmaker occupied for the rest of the afternoon.

* * * *

Two weeks later

Em looked around the room at the women gathered for the focus group. She smiled nervously at Heidi. Tonight was the first feedback session on Nicolai's design. She squirmed uncomfortably as her body reacted to the mere thought of him. She had made herself scarce after the encounter in his work room.

She had come unbearably close to raping the man. Heidi came over and stood next to her.

"So what do you think, Em? Are we going to be one of the first shops to carry Nicolai's new design or not?"

"I don't know, Heidi," she said honestly as some of her most loyal customers chatted amongst themselves.

"How are you two beautiful ladies tonight?" Nicolai asked as he joined them.

"Fine," Em said as one of her customers waved at her. "Excuse me."

* * * *

Nicolai watched as Em scurried away. He turned to Heidi. With Em avoiding him, he had become very friendly with her assistant. She was a pleasant enough young lady but she didn't do a thing for him. He wanted Em and he had decided that he was going to have her.

"Still avoiding me, I see," he said, sipping from the water bottle in his calloused hand.

"I don't know what has gotten into her lately, Nicolai. She's been on pins and needles since this has started."

Nicolai thought about reassuring her that her boss would soon be in a much mellower mood. He had figured out that Empress was a very private woman and he didn't want to cause any gossip about her to her employees.

"Oh, it's probably just nerves about this. I know she's been wanting to put me in my place," he replied as he screwed the cap back on his bottle.

"She did say something about that," Heidi admitted as they watched Em go around the room and pass out the questionnaires.

"It looks like we're ready to get started. Shall we join them?" Nicolai offered Heidi his arm.

"Lets get this party started," she agreed.

Em drew a deep breath when Nicolai stood next to her, only to gasp as his aftershave teased her nose. She had to get herself and this whole thing under control first!

"Thank you, ladies, for taking the time to come out tonight." Nicolai's deep voice gained attention. "I know I would love to have all rave reviews but that is not the sole

purpose for this focus group. I want to hear what is good about my designs but I also want to know what I can do to make them better. Empress was nice enough to give me each of your measurements and the dresses were made specifically with your measurements in mind. So please feel free to be honest with me. I assure you that I have a thick skin.

"So shall we begin?" he finished.

* * * *

Em drifted from group to group. After his opening statement, Nicolai had suggested that the ladies break up into groups of four to discuss the questionnaire. So far most of the feedback that she had heard was positive. They loved the style and quality of the design. Nicolai did excellent work. There were a few negatives...such as where the women would actually wear the dress. Much like Empress, the women were concerned about the way the dress displayed their ample bodies. They weren't sure that they would be able to wear it in public. And if they were going to spend their hard earned money on it — was it worth it for just a dress that they would wear only in the privacy of their own home.

"Hey there, *mi bella*," Nicolai said softly behind Em. She shivered. The man was lethal. He needed to wear bells as a warning to unsuspecting women, she thought.

"Nicolai," she replied as she glanced over her shoulder at him.

"So are you ready to model my design?" he asked, so only she could hear him.

"Counting your chickens before they hatch, are we?" Her blunt reply was equally quiet.

"Some of the things you say," he chuckled.

* * * *

Em shut the door, flipping the lock, and leaned against it. What a night. She gazed around the room, tempted to leave the mess till the morning. the morning, but her practical Midwest upbringing would not let her. She grabbed the trash bin and set to work.

Nicolai watched from the shadows as Em picked up the discarded cups, plates and napkins. He had told Heidi that he would help clean up when she had mentioned she couldn't stay back herself. Walking out of the shadows, he walked over and gathered up a handful of garbage.

"Here, let me help with that," he said. Em jumped in surprise.

"Dear God, I swear I'm going to put a bell around your neck, Nicolai. You scared me." Em pressed her hand over her heart.

"Sorry. I promised Heidi I would stay and help. She felt guilty about having to go home," he said, gathering the last of the trash. "So what's next?"

"I need to fold up the chairs and put them back in the closet, along with folding tables."

"Well, lets get to it. You look tired, Em. Sooner we get this done the sooner you can go home."

"What? No sexual innuendo?" she was surprised at his gentle tone.

"Hey, I can be a nice guy, Empress. Just don't tell anyone."

"I'm sure no one would believe me any way."

"Just you wait. Tomorrow all bets are off, Em."

"You're just gloating that you won," Em protested.

"I would like to think we both won, Empress." Nicolai carried two of the chairs into large walk-in closet.

"How do you figure? You aren't the one that is going to be damn near naked."

"Oh, is that the issue? If you wanted me naked, all you had to do was say so," he smirked, lifting them onto the special rack in of the closet.

"I didn't say that!"

"Oh," he said knowingly. He knew damn well that she wanted him as much as he wanted her. This balancing game he had been playing was finally over. And come tomorrow he was going to start pursuing her.

Em dusted off her hands as she shoved the last chair into the closet.

"Coming through," Nicolai said as he carried the final table into the closet propping it up against the wall before wiping his forehead on his sleeve.

"Thanks for all the help," Em said , shoving a chair rack against the table and accidentally bumping into Nicolai, who in turn knocked the heavy door. As it started to close, Em tried to catch it, only to tread on Nicolai's foot.

"Ouch!"

"Sorry, sorry, catch that door!"

"What?" Nicolai was intent on rubbing his aching foot.

"Damn it!" she exclaimed as the door snicked shut.

"What is the problem?" Nicolai asked. "We'll just open it again."

"Go ahead," she said frostily.

He scowled at her grabbed the door handle. It refused to budge.

"Ah, Em, what's wrong with your door?" he asked just as they were plunged into darkness.

"Why the HELL did the lights all go off?" he growled.

"What's wrong, Nicolai? Scared of the dark?" she taunted. He moved toward her voice and bumped into her.

"I'll show you scared," he hissed as her delicious scent filled his nose. The slender hold he had on his overwhelming desire for her snapped. He yanked her against him and covered her mouth with his.

Em knew the moment the door closed that it was over. She was going to be trapped in the closet with Nicolai until Heidi came in the morning. And there was no way that she was going to be able to resist him. And she wasn't wrong, she thought hazily as he thrust his tongue inside of her mouth. All the need and desire flared inside of her as his tongue rubbed against hers.

She moaned when he wrenched his mouth away from hers. Their ragged breathing filled the darkness.

"The door locks automatically from the outside," she said.

"I don't care," he growled, seeking out her mouth once more. When his hand covered her breast, she groaned. She arched into him as he teased her hard nipple with his thumb.

"Nicolai, please," she whimpered.

"Yes!" He slipped his hand under her top in search of bare skin. "You don't know how long I've wanted to do this."

Em arched across his arms and jerked as he found her breast. As he traced the outline of her nipple, she panted.

"I want you, Em. Can I have you?" he pleaded in the darkness. He released her and backed away to give her a chance to think clearly.

Em stilled as his impassioned plea struck her. She trembled as the desire coursed through her. Maybe this was the perfect opportunity, she thought. In the darkness, he couldn't see her body. He wouldn't be able to find her lacking. She might actually be able to relax and let nature take its course.

"Yes," she whispered.

"Are you protected?" he asked hoarsely.

"No," she groaned as he released her, "do you have something?"

"No. But that's not to say we can't do other things," he said after a moment.

"Other things?" she said softly.

"Yes. Come here, Em," his husky voice whispered through darkness.

Em fumbled her way toward his voice. She nearly moaned when she came up against his half naked chest. Evidently he had taken advantage of the darkness to undo the first few buttons of his shirt. Crisp hairs teased the palms of her hands as she slid them up to rest on his broad shoulders.

She squealed when his hands came down and gripped her waist and lifted her off her feet.

"Shh...relax," he said against her temple as he turned with her.

She felt the hard surface of counter that lined the one side of the closet. She held her breath as he fumbled with her long skirt. Trying to help, she lifted her hips. He

managed to drag the skirt up enough to step in between her spread legs. She felt the folds on her blouse loosen just before his calloused hands slipped inside to cup her aching breasts. She cried out softly in response.

"Front or back?" he asked as he continued to fondle her breasts.

"What?" she gasped, his thumbs teasing her hard nipples through the material.

"Help me here, Em. Does this bra open in the back or front? I've been dying to see and feel these beauties since I measured them two weeks ago," he said and pressed open-mouthed kisses against her neck.

Em focused on his words and sent a silent prayer heavenward, that the lights were out. At times she felt like a freak of nature. Since she had been a teenager, she had to special order her bras.

"Em, I'm dying here," he groaned as he strung kisses down her neck.

"Back," she answered as he fastened his mouth on the crook of her neck and shoulder. She held her breath as his fingers expertly opened the back closure of her bra. She sighed in pleasure as he loosened the bra and freed her breasts. She pressed her breasts into his hands and whimpered as he squeezed and gently kneaded her sensitive flesh.

"Damn," he growled before lifting her by her waist so her breasts were level with his mouth. He hungrily latched onto one of her nipples.

Em tensed as pleasure shot from her nipple to her womb. A sharp gasp escaped her tight throat when he released one nipple to attack the other. She wrapped her arms around his neck and buried her fingers in his hair to hold him to her.

He chuckled against her as he ran his hands up and under her skirt. His fingers brushed her inner thigh before sliding around to cup her ass and pull her tight against his rock hard cock. They both moaned as she wrapped her legs around his waist. She whimpered as he released her nipple and let her slide down his chest. He stopped her slide when he spun around and pressed her back up against the nearest wall. He rocked against her as she cried out.

"You're so sexy. Just stand here and let me explore," he said against her ear as he slid his fingers into under the elastic of her panties.

"Nicolai!" she pleaded as his inquisitive fingers slid between the globes of her butt.

"What a sexy ass, you have, *mi brav'ragazza*," he whispered before dipping his tongue inside her ear.

"*Mi brav'ragazza*?" she asked as his mouth slid down from her ear to land on the side of her neck. He unwrapped her legs from his waist and set her on her feet.

"My good girl," he translated, sinking to his knees in front of her. He reached up with both hands and slowly slid her panties down her endless legs.

"What are you..." she asked breathlessly as he draped one of her legs over his shoulder.

"Shh...I'm exploring 'other things'," he said as he pressed a kiss against her thigh, "hmm...you smell delicious, Em," and then he nibbled her thighs.

"Oh my..." she gasped as she felt his lips press against her pussy. A moment later she felt the glide of his tongue and groaned. Her thighs began to tremble as her climax came closer.

"Hmm," he growled against her. She shrieked when he slid two fingers inside of her.

"Nicolai!" she pleaded. He lifted his head and his raspy breathing could be heard in the darkness.

"Yum. You are so wet, *mi brav'ragazza*," he said as the sound of her wetness around his fingers could be heard. She panted as he slowly started to thrust his fingers in and out of her. "Damn, I wish I could sink inside of you. You are so tight," he rasped just before she felt the wet heat of his mouth press against her clit. She tossed her head as she teetered on the verge of coming. She couldn't believe it. She was actually going to come with a man! As his tongue flickered over her hard clit, he thrust his fingers faster inside of her, his groan of approval vibrating against her.

"I've...I've...never...ah..." she gasped.

"Mmmm-hmmmm," he moaned in approval.

"Nicolai!" she screamed as her climax began.

Nicolai growled happily as Em's juices flooded his hand. She tasted delicious. She was a regular wildcat, bucking against his face and fingers. If he didn't know any better, he would have sworn that it was the first time she had ever been gone down on. The only thing that would have made it any better for him was if he would have been able to see her beautiful face as she came. As she finally came down from her release, he eased his fingers from her and slowly lifted his mouth. He laid his head against her stomach as he waited for her to quiet. In his pants, his cock throbbed. He wished that he had thought to place a condom in his pocket. He didn't know if she would reciprocate or not but maybe she would be willing to help him take matters in hand, so to speak.

"Are you okay, *mi brav'ragazza*?" he asked as he slowly stood up, painfully readjusting his aching cock.

"Wow," she said, her voice full of awe and satisfaction.

"You liked that?" he asked as he pressed his lips against hers. She moaned softly as she tasted herself -creamy, salty lusciousness - on him.

"Unbelievable," she whispered when he lifted his head. His harsh breathing filled the room.

"Why, *mi brav'ragazza*? Is it so out of character for you to have a man kneeling in front of you and worshipping your body?"

"Well...I don't usually do this kind of thing in my closet," she said.

"I see. So what do you normally do in your closet?" he asked as he slowly unbuckled his belt. His cock was killing him. He needed relief, even if she wasn't going to help. As hot as he was, even listening to her sexy voice would get him off.

Her husky laughter teased his senses. He unbuttoned his slacks and the loud sound of his zipper filled the closet.

"Nicolai?" her whisper held a note of wariness.

"Shh, *mi bella*. I won't take anything you won't give me willingly. My little 'taste' has made me harder than hell and I am not too arrogant to take matters into my own hands," he explained as he freed his aching cock from the confines of his snug briefs. His sigh of relief echoed through the room. For a moment there was silence and Nicolai thought he might have shocked her. Pleasure flooded his system as he ran his hand over the head of his cock and down the shaft. He reached under it to cup his aching balls. He couldn't remember ever being as hard as he was now.

"Let me," her voice whispered into his ear. He hissed as she gently bit his ear. This was definitely a new experience for him. And one that he could get used to, he thought as she nibbled her way down his neck. He chuckled when she grabbed the neck of his dress shirt and tugged hard. The soft ping of the buttons hitting various surfaces was barely noticeable.

"Impatient?" he growled as she pushed him back the wall where she had been such a short time ago.

"A bit. Now, just stand here and let *me* explore," she said.

"Explore?" he gasped as she lightly bit one of his nipples.

"Other things," she said, pressing damp kisses against his abdomen. He pressed his head back against the wall when she pushed his hands away from his cock. She replaced his hands with hers.

"*Dio mio!*" he exclaimed when she licked the head and sucked him inside of her mouth. He had hoped but hadn't dared believe that Ms. Empress Chikowski would actually go down on her knees and return the favor.

"Hmm," she grumbled against him. He tensed as she cupped his balls with one hand and wrapped her hand around the base of him. Her tongue was doing wicked things to him. He could feel every brush of it against his sensitive glans as she teased the underside with the flat of her tongue.

"Em, I..." he gritted between clenched teeth as she gently squeezed his balls and stroked her hand up and down the shaft as she released him from her mouth to only tongue and suck the end of him.

"You taste delicious," she informed him before sucking him back inside of her mouth before quickly releasing him, "like the air before a thunderstorm...heavy and salty."

Nicolai slid his hands into her hair and gently guided her back to his near to bursting cock. He needed her mouth on him. And now.

"Please, Em," he pleaded.

"So hard," she cooed as she ran her hands up and down him and breathed on the head of his cock. "And mine to have?" she asked when his hips shot forward in a desperate attempt to find entrance to her mouth.

"*Fai come vuoi*," he said as he fell back into the language of his youth.

"Hmm?" she questioned as she licked the end while holding him still for her nimble tongue.

"Do as you please," he translated roughly, releasing her hair and slapping his hands back against the wall. His control was fraying rapidly. He had promised her that he wouldn't force her to do anything and he was dangerously close to grabbing her head and burying his cock in her wet mouth. It was taking all of his willpower to let her go at her own pace.

"I do believe I will and you know what would please me, Nicolai?" she asked, licking the pre cum leaking from him.

"What?" he groaned, his chest heaving.

"For you to come in my mouth. Do you think that you could do that for me? In your *brav'ragazza's* mouth?" She sucked the head back into her mouth, not waiting for his reply.

"Sì!" he agreed desperately as he locked his hands behind his neck.

"*Buono*," she replied.

"*Dio mio*," he panted, the sound of his native tongue on her lips pushing him over the edge.

Em sucked strongly as he filled her mouth with rope after rope of semen. She could feel him trembling as she softened her mouth and soft lips.

"Empress."

She smiled as she licked away the last traces of his release before slowly letting him drop out of her mouth. She was surprised when he didn't immediately soften.

"Nicolai?" she questioned as she ran her hand down his still hard shaft.

"Yeah?" he replied hoarsely.

"You are still hard. Didn't I please you?" she asked.

"Yes, you did! Don't mind him. He's a greedy bastard," he chuckled wearily.

"Really? Well, we'll see about that," she said naughtily before sucking him back into her mouth.

He groaned in approval as his hands buried themselves in her hair.

* * * *

Em looked at herself in the floor length mirror in Nicolai's guest room. It had been a week since the episode in her closet at Empress's. They had seen each other several times since Heidi had arrived the next morning and released them from the closet.

Even though there had been ample opportunity for Em to further their sexual relationship and she had made the offer, Nicolai had failed to take advantage. Maybe he

was satisfied with the oral sex that she had given him and wanted nothing further from her.

So now, she was at his house, in his guest bedroom, trying on the dress as she had promised. She stared in disbelief at how the dress molded to her figure, accenting her curves but hiding her obvious flaws. Or what she saw as flaws. But now did she have the courage to go downstairs and face its creator?

* * * *

Nicolai paced back in forth as he spoke with his brother.

"Are you sure you know what you are doing, Nicolai?" Sergio asked.

"No, but if I don't try, I'll never know. She's crawled under my skin and I have to find out if she will accept me."

"This is a rather harsh way to do this. Does she realize that your invitation to your private beach is actually an invitation to the family nudist reunion?"

"No."

"You are braver man than I am. Let's hope she doesn't want your *coglione* on a silver platter."

"Rachel took to it well," Nicolai said as he rubbed the back of his neck.

"Yes, she did, but she loves me," Sergio agreed as his wife came into the living room.

"Well, I am hoping that with everyone here wearing our new design it will ease her into my life." Nicolai said sheepishly.

"Lets hope it doesn't back fire on you." Sergio replied as he took Rachel's hand and led her outside to join the rest of the Rambaudi family.

"*Dio mio*, I hope not," he whispered softly, "because I'm in love with her."

* * * *

Nicolai took a deep breath as he walked up the stairs to check on Em. She had been hiding in his guest room for the last hour. He was dying to see how she looked in his design. Knocking softly on the door, he waited for her to bid him to enter.

"Yes," came her hesitant response.

"It's I, *mi brav'ragazza*," Nicolai said as he slowly opened the door. He stepped into the room and caught his breath. Her body showed off his creation to perfection. True, she wasn't as petite as Rachel or any other woman he had met. But he would never have to worry about hurting her when passion had him wrapped in its coils. Now, more than ever, she reminded him of an Amazon princess. His Amazon, he hoped.

"I can't believe that you talked me into this, Nicolai. This dress is quite scandalous." Em said as she turned to face him. She was surprised when he walked over and took her hands in his. She could see warmth and caring in their deep chocolate depths.

"You look beautiful, *mi bella*," he assured her as he slowly coaxed her out of the room.

"Where are we going?" she asked softly.

"For a walk. On my private beach. Come, *mi brav'ragazza*, be a bit daring with me," he urged.

"But you are not the one that is half naked," she protested as he led her to the sliding glass door that led out to the beach.

"No, *mi bella*, I am not half naked," he agreed as he opened the silk robe that he had been wearing when she arrived at his house.

She gasped when he slid the robe off and stood before her in all his naked glory.

"Nicolai!" she gasped.

"*Zio Nicolai!*" a small girl's voice yelled from the beach.

Em swung around and blushed to the roots of her hair. Running up the beach was a small brunette who was naked as a jaybird. Or so she thought until, the little girl came within a few feet of her. She was actually wearing a smaller version of the dress that Em herself was wearing and she looked as if she might be all of five years old.

"*Buon pomeriggio, Rosario*," he said as he dropped down on one knee and hugged the little girl, oblivious to his nakedness. When he stood back up, he picked the little girl up effortlessly. He turned to a shocked Em.

"Say hello, to Empress, Rosario. She is a close friend of mine," he told the girl softly.

"*Buon pomeriggio, Empress*," the little girl said, her Italian accent thick.

"Em, this is my niece. Her father and mother are visiting me from Italy. In fact we are having a family reunion this afternoon. I would love for you to stay and join us."

Nicolai said softly as a woman rushed up from the beach, to claim her daughter.

"Rosario, I told you to wait for Nicolai to bring his friend down," the woman scolded softly as she took the little girl from Nicolai. "I am so sorry, Nicolai. She got away from me," the woman said before hurrying back down the beach. Em couldn't believe her eyes. The mother too was wearing Nicolai's design.

"So what do you say, Empress? Would you do me the honor of being my date for the reunion?" he asked huskily as he pressed her hand against his beating heart.

"Nicolai, you can't mean to go down there like that!" Em gasped as she stared at his nude body.

"Why?" he asked innocently.

"Because there are children..." she said as she gestured to the people that were gathered further down the beach.

"Em, look at me," he whispered.

She turned and tried to keep her eyes on his.

"*Mi brav'ragazza*, I want you to understand something. The human body is nothing to be ashamed of. Whether a person is short or tall, slender or fat or somewhere in between, the human body is beautiful. And *mi famiglia* celebrates that. This is why I purchased a home that had a private beach."

"You are telling me that your entire family are nudists?" she squeaked.

"Yes, back home, Em, nudism is very common, we don't hide our bodies. Today in honor of you, *mi famiglia* has chosen to wear my design. I am aware that not every woman or man feels comfortable walking around in the nude, hence my inspiration for my designs. Why not give to those who aren't ready for the reality of being naked, the illusion of it while still preserving their modesty? *Mi famiglia* has chosen to do this as a gift to you but do not be shocked if later they decide to take them off," he said gently.

Em closed her eyes at the thought of her family doing such a thing. It just boggled her mind.

"Won't you at least stay and let me show you the difference between nudity and taking pleasure in the human body?"

Em looked around in a daze, her mind whirling.

"Why would they do this?" she finally asked.

"Because I have told them that I love you, *cara mia*," he said as he stared out at the water.

"You love me?" she squeaked.

He turned back to face her.

"Yes. I fell in love with you the first time you gave me hell for trying to use my charms on you," he said as he gently touched her hair.

"You sure have a hell of way showing it!" she stated hotly.

"Why are you so angry with me, Empress?" he asked.

"I thought that you didn't want me anymore," she whispered.

"Not want you?" he asked in disbelief.

"You haven't seemed interested since that night in my closet."

"Oh, *cara mia*, the only reason I didn't is because I wouldn't have been able to let you go if I had known the pleasure of possessing you fully. And I need to make sure that you can accept all of me. And this is what this is about," he said gesturing to his family on the beach. "So will you come with me?"

Em looked up in his honest eyes and knew , despite her fear, she had to give this brave man a chance. He had laid everything on the line without asking for anything more than a chance from her.

"I'll go," she agreed and tentatively held her hand out to him.

"*Grazie, mi brav'ragazza*," he whispered against the palm of her hand before pressing his lips against hers.

EPILOGUE

Six months later

Empress stood at her new husband's side and watched as her new nieces and nephews frolicked in the ocean waves. All of his family had returned for their wedding yesterday. She found it almost a dream - a dream come true. She had finally found a man who loved her as she was and was just as passionate about her as he was his work. Growing up in a small town in Iowa, she never one day dreamed that she would ever be standing on the beach naked as the day she was born and feel comfortable about it. But with a bit of coaxing from her sister-in-law and a lot of love from her husband - she had finally made it.

"*Zia Em*, you're naked!" Rosario clapped with glee as she rushed up to Em and tackled her legs. Em smiled fondly at the little girl.

"So it seems," Em said as she effortlessly picked up the little girl, "but how could I let a little girl like you, do something that I couldn't?" she teased before tickling the little girl. Rosario giggled and squirmed to be let down. Em released her with a sigh of pleasure and watched as the girl ran off to join her cousins in the warm waters.

"Thank you, *mi mogile*," Nicolai said as he wrapped his arms around her waist and pulling her back -against his nude body.

"No, thank you, Nicolai, for breaking me out of my shell," she replied as she relaxed in his arms...and they all lived happily ever after.

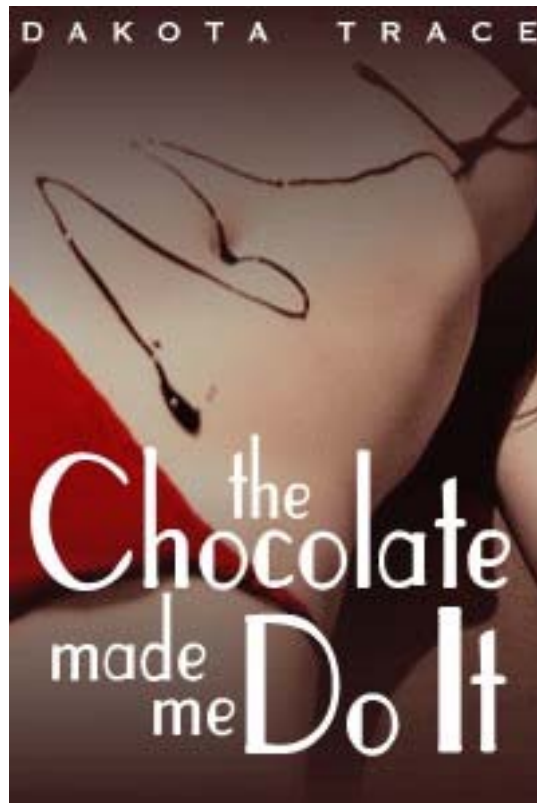
The End

ABOUT DAKOTA TRACE

Dakota hails from the home state of the Hawkeyes, corn and pigs. Surrounded by children's laughter and the corn fields, she crafts her stories. She enjoys writing romances and sci-fi/fantasy stories. She is a romantic at heart, so even the sci-fi stories have an underlying romantic plot. She started writing at the tender age of fourteen and hasn't stopped since. Although it is a mystery to most where she finds the time to write. Aside from being a full time wife and mother, she also works the dreaded overnight shift at a clothing company.

To find out more about Dakota visit her at <http://dakotatrace.wordpress.com/>.

If you enjoyed BARELY THERE, you might also enjoy:



THE CHOCOLATE MADE ME DO IT

By Dakota Trace

Annabelle is in love with the creamy chocolate confections Zephyrus Raincloud crafts in his shop, “The Delights”. While it wouldn’t take much for Annabelle to fall in love with him, she’s leery of risking her heart on a man who can’t see past the color of her skin to the warm affectionate woman she is. After one brief encounter, she swears it can’t happen again. But Zephyrus has decided she now belongs to him. How far will this chocolate maker go to seduce her into his way of thinking?

Warning: This title contains graphic language and sex.

Excerpt From **THE CHOCOLATE MADE ME DO IT:**

“Zephyr.”

“What?” He turned away from the door to look at her impatiently.

“She’s locked us in.”

“I know, but I don’t understand.”

“Here.” She handed the dry erase board to him. She watched as he read the note. “I guess there’s one good thing.”

“What’s that?” He looked at her warily.

“Well, two actually. One is that I’m locked in my favorite chocolate shop which means you get to feed me all kinds of yummy things. And two, I’ll have time to finish the rest of your paperwork.”

“Wait a minute. What do you know about doing financial or accounting paperwork?” He frowned.

“Everything! Where you may be the master of chocolate, Zephyrus, I am the master of finance.”

When he continued to look at her as if she had grown three heads, she frowned,

“What? I’m a financial advisor, and yes, I am degreed and licensed.”

“Okay.” He watched her turn back towards the kitchen. “Where are you going?”

“To get my fee.”

‘What!’ He reluctantly followed her into the kitchen. He found her at the work counter where he had just finished coating his raspberry brownies. She had one in her hand and had it halfway to her temptingly open mouth.

“What do you think you are doing?” He watched her take a bite out of the brownie. When she moaned softly, he stilled. Was this how she always reacted to his brownies? Annabelle turned towards the shocked man standing in the doorway, swallowed her little taste of heaven first, then smiled broadly at him.

“You make the best brownies I’ve ever tasted. As for what I’m doing, well, your sister and I made an agreement—I do your books and get the financial details in order and she feeds me your chocolates.”

“Is this how you always react to my brownies?” His eyes turned darker as desire flared in them.

“You mean as if I’ve died and gone to heaven? I’m sure I’m not the first to tell you that. You know that you are damn good at making chocolate delights and other yummys.” She caught her breath in response to his heated stare.

“Well, I try.” He watched her take another bite out of the brownie; when she moaned again, he felt himself harden behind the fly of his jeans.

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